

To the DA, Judge, and Probation Officer,

On the morning of January 6, 2023, as I lay in bed, I wondered why I had not heard Josh return from his meeting with his probation officer after finishing work. Anxiety and fear began to set in, though this was not uncommon. Since his release from prison in 2020, Josh and our family have faced ongoing struggles. The monitoring devices placed on him proved ineffective due to poor signal reception at home and work, resulting in frequent visits from the police at all hours of the day and night. These visits often led to his brief incarceration because no one was available to clear the issue after 3:30 PM or on weekends. Josh always took these challenges in stride, reassuring me that everything was fine, but the constant disruptions were deeply frustrating. This pattern persisted for a long time, almost like he was being tested.

When we first met with his probation officer after his release, I inquired about the programs available but was told that such information was "none of my business." The officers never entered our home, and most communication took place in the driveway or parking lot of their office. There was no offer of guidance, resources, or any indication of how we could support Josh through this challenging period.

I genuinely hoped that the probation system was meeting his needs, but looking back, it's clear that the support provided was insufficient. Josh was isolated, unable to go anywhere or do anything without explicit permission. He was unable to build relationships or move forward with his life, and despite being in their care, he received little to no assistance from the very professionals tasked with his rehabilitation. This lack of support, combined with the failure of the Department of Corrections to equip him with the tools necessary for success, left him in a vulnerable position.

I did not realize how much he was struggling or that his addiction was quietly resurfacing. When he called from jail that day, it was both shocking and heartbreaking. If we had known, we would have sought the help he needed, but in that moment, we failed him.

I also deeply regret sending the pictures to the jail. I did not fully understand how harmful that decision could be at the time.

Josh is a kind and thoughtful person. After his release, he went out of his way to assist others, whether it was helping his aunt and uncle clean up after a storm or supporting another uncle during harvest. He always put others first, often at his own expense. Whenever I proposed a project around the house or yard, Josh would quietly assess what was needed. Without hesitation, he would gather the supplies and begin the work, often without asking for assistance. I always appreciated his initiative and effort, and in return, I would make his favorite desserts, like apple crisp or cookies, as a small token of my gratitude. I did everything I could to bring him some happiness.

Thinking about the girls and the impact on their lives fills me with sadness. I pray for them each night, hoping they can heal from what they endured and move forward. I wish for their lives to be restored and for them to find peace and happiness.

While he may never fully be able to express the depth of his regret to those he has hurt, the first step toward redemption is to seek the help he needs. I believe that by doing so, he can begin to make a positive difference in someone else's life. We have lost so much time with Josh, and we ask for a second chance to be there for him. We are not young, and our time to support him is limited. We respectfully ask for your mercy and are fully committed to using every opportunity to help Josh succeed.

Sincerely,

Betty Shumrod

Please don't let his past, prevent him from his future.